

Reflecting on Our *2020 COVID Journey*

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At year's end, there is a natural tendency to look back and reflect upon the memorable events that shaped our lives, for better or worse.

The year 2020 took us to a whole new level of reflection, when you consider that the world we live in was turned upside down by COVID-19. And while there was, and continues to be, profound tragedy surrounding the effects of this dreaded virus, this year's reflection also bears light on the formidable strength of our agency, its people and the critical role we play in the community. Our staff experienced several logistical and emotional transitions as the initial wave of COVID cases in our community increased. Pressure to learn and adapt to administering care, while wearing personal protective

equipment, was met with some hesitation by staff, whose care is based on connecting personally with those they serve. The smiles on the faces of our staff were now hidden behind semi-breathable cotton shields. It was also critical to respond to all the demands rapidly and to work closely with our community partners to assist patients and caregivers as they navigated the complexities created by the pandemic.



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Facilitating the union of family with the dying during crisis seemed familiar, and it inevitably inspired staff and community to respond with a new sense of purpose.



As our country and county learned more about the virus, the requirements for protection of both clinical and support staff resulted in serving patients through virtual means. Crash courses in Zoom, WebEx and FaceTime were offered and received with trepidation. Operating through a “screen presence,” every possible effort was made to treat, support and comfort.

Clinical and support staff navigated a difficult course, while the administration continued to follow the hour-by-hour clinical, financial and regulatory updates—all of which needed to be communicated to staff in real time. Fear and frustration were also the experience by the patients and families who were, at times, denied access to each other. When the stories of loved ones who were not allowed to be at the bedside of the dying began to surface, it did not take long for our teams to pull together and find safe, creative and expedient ways to bring

the dying either home or to our Inpatient Unit, where they could reunite with their loved ones. Facilitating the union of families has been a priority that has inspired our staff and our community. This was particularly true for our staff, who themselves experienced isolation from family members, and some who themselves had lost loved ones during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through their own grief (complicated grief is actually a diagnosis), we watched as they worked tirelessly, finding comfort in helping others in our community cope with the devastating effects of this virus. Amidst the fear and uncertainty, what arose were stories of perseverance and dedicated service to our community as well as to each other.

To our staff, patients, families and community partners, may we continue to work together with resolve and gratitude, while sharing in our hope for a brighter 2021. ■



— Cary Sisti, MS, ANP-BC
Chief Clinical Operations Officer



— Kelley Clem, RN, MS
VP Clinical Education
& Patient Advocacy

A Message from the COO



Roseann McAnulty

Our administrative staff members are dedicated to those who care for our patients and families because they know that everything ultimately affects patient care. Administrators typically work quietly behind the scenes to make sure the organization operates

smoothly. They are responsible for functions such as hiring, payroll, maintaining and beautifying our facilities, assisting with our technology, making sure medical records are readily available, and so much more.

This group was not immune to the challenges of last year, which began with the need to create a remote work environment. Although this happened quickly, we adapted and increased our technical capabilities exponentially, rapidly deploying new technology and providing just-in-time training. We also sustained our finances despite losing

opportunities to raise money from events. This became a wonderful and visible show of teamwork. As supplies began to tighten, our purchasing department went into overdrive as they worked to make sure we had masks, gowns, goggles and all the protective equipment and supplies needed to safely provide care to our patients and families. We wrapped up the year with a strategic plan that included input from across the organization, providing a roadmap for the future ahead.

It was a year of changes and challenges. Through all of it, we found ways to connect and work differently while supporting each other, whether clinical or administrative. From the creation of a “tiger team” that worked on projects from branding to unloading supplies, staff were always willing to lend a hand wherever and whenever it was needed most. Our world changed last year, yet what did not change was our unwavering commitment to serve our patients, our community and each other. I could not be more humbled to work with such a fine group of individuals.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roseann McAnulty". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'R' and 'M'.

Roseann McAnulty
Chief Operating Officer

Foundation Update



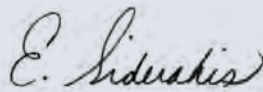
Elizabeth Siderakis

Reflecting upon 2020, I can't help but think about the strength and resilience of our Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo family. We saw our colleagues work tirelessly to serve our patients, caregivers and those grieving the loss of their loved ones. Our Foundation team worked together with our volunteers and community partners to rethink and redesign just about everything we do in response to the new parameters set forth by the pandemic. We maintained holiday traditions, selling out of holiday bells and ornaments and hosting our first virtual Light-A-Life Memorial Tree Lighting ceremony. While we missed the chance to be together, the broadcast gave our supporters from

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all over the country the chance to tune in to the program on TV — a bit of a silver lining. With the help of the Angel Fund and our willing and ready volunteers, holiday meals and special treats were provided to many of our hospice and palliative care families. It's hard to believe that so much was accomplished while working from home and coordinating car and porch drop-offs with colleagues and volunteers. The commitment and energy to serve our community was unwavering. Year-end is always a busy time for annual donations, and so many of you stood by us and chose Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo as one of your philanthropic priorities. Thank you.

Now we have welcomed the new year with renewed energy and the hope for new beginnings. Spring is almost upon us and we are pleased to launch the 35th annual Hospice Spring Bouquet Sale, which will run from March 1–13. As the beautiful colors of the bouquets are seen through Western New York, we hope it will be the first of many signs of good things to come. ■



Elizabeth Siderakis
Executive Vice President, Hospice Foundation

New Foundation Board *Appointments*

Hospice Foundation welcomes two new members.



Karen L. Merkel, General Manager,
National Fuel Gas Company

Karen L. Merkel is a senior corporate communications and public relations executive with more than 30 years of experience in corporate, non-profit and academic settings. Respected as a knowledgeable and effective spokesperson and experienced crisis manager, Karen leads the

communications, marketing and advertising functions at National Fuel Gas Company — a diversified, publicly traded energy company headquartered in Buffalo, NY, that is engaged in a number of natural gas-related activities. Additionally, Karen manages the company's community relations program and the National Fuel Gas Company Foundation.



Maggie Wilson, Vice President of
Human Resources, Linde Inc.

Maggie Wilson is Vice President of Human Resources, Linde Inc. (formerly Praxair Inc.). For over 25 years, Maggie has had a career in Human Resource management, having graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree and Business Administration degree

from the State University of New York at Fredonia and a Micro-MBA from the University at Buffalo School of Management. Her expertise spans talent development, organizational change management, and diversity and inclusion.

New Hospice Medical Director *Appointment*



Debra Luczkiewicz, MD

DEBRA LUCZKIEWICZ, MD, MEDICAL DIRECTOR, HOSPICE & PALLIATIVE CARE BUFFALO

Dr. Debra Luczkiewicz has recently been promoted to the role of Hospice Medical Director. Dr. Luczkiewicz has been with Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo for

11 years and has graciously assumed numerous roles along the way, particularly as a committed educator. During the pandemic, she has also been an integral partner to the clinical operations team as they developed essential protocols and processes. Dr. Luczkiewicz epitomizes the best of our care at the bedside and is always willing to contribute in other ways.

She is a graduate of the SUNY at Buffalo School of Medicine, is Board Certified in both Family Medicine and Hospice & Palliative Medicine, and formerly worked as a Clinical Assistant Professor in the Department of Family Medicine at UB, teaching students, residents and fellows while maintaining a private practice in Amherst, NY.

Dr. Luczkiewicz is succeeding Megan Farrell, MD, who fortunately is not leaving the organization. Dr. Farrell is gradually transitioning toward retirement over the next several years and hopes to have more uninterrupted time in her home in Maine.

"I don't know where to begin in thanking Megan, who since her arrival, has always been the keeper of the flame and the protector of our staff and care," commented Christopher Kerr, MD, Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo CEO. "We are so fortunate to have Dr. Farrell still on board with us."

Dr. Luczkiewicz will work alongside Rebecca Calabrese, MD, our Medical Director of Palliative Care, and John Tangeman, MD, who will continue as Administrative Medical Director.

"The longer I work here, the more excited and proud I am to see people within the organization grow into larger roles, including leadership," exclaimed Dr. Kerr. "Dr. Luczkiewicz is a perfect example of how our culture welcomes and creates opportunities for people to grow and potentiate."

Dr. Luczkiewicz is originally from the St. Louis, MO, and the Detroit, MI, areas, but she has made Western New York her home for many years, residing in Amherst with her husband, Ken. Her two children live in Boston, MA, and Briarcliff Manor, NY, and she is looking forward to the arrival of her first grandchild this spring.

Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo congratulates Dr. Luczkiewicz in her new role and wishes her the best as she embarks on a new journey at an organization she is dedicated to.

Perspectives *Corner*

ROBERT MILCH, MD
MEDICAL DIRECTOR, EMERITUS, HOSPICE & PALLIATIVE CARE BUFFALO



Robert Milch, MD

A tumultuous four months ago, November was celebrated as National Hospice and Palliative Care Month.

This is an opportunity to raise awareness about the unique programs in our community, which enable patients and families to live as comfortably and fully as possible despite life-limiting or serious illness. It is a chance to acknowledge the skilled, selfless, compassionate service of the doctors, nurses, social workers, clergy, counselors, volunteers and staff who comprise the interdisciplinary teams delivering that care.

One of the first dozen hospices in America, Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo is now one of more than 4,500 programs nationally providing symptom control, pain management, psychosocial, spiritual and bereavement care to patients and families. Last year, nearly 1.5 million people across the country availed themselves of these services.

While that number grows each year, care is often sought late in the course of advanced illness, mitigating the potential benefits of goal achievement, comfort and even prolonged survival. Sad to say, that is the experience locally as well — despite national and international recognition for local programs' scope of service, innovation and research, the length of stay for hospice patients in Western New York remains stubbornly, disappointingly low.

Hospice is more than a place, and while we are fortunate to have hospice campuses and inpatient units, most care is received in patients' homes. Wherever rendered, hospice embodies a philosophy of comprehensive, competent, holistic care. It recognizes the patient to be more than the one in the bed, with physical, psychic and spiritual needs that go beyond the capabilities of any

single practitioner. An entire psychosocial patient-family constellation needs be cared for as well, through illness into bereavement, and hospice programs are uniquely designed and coordinated to do just that.

It's been said that one death is a tragedy; a thousand deaths is a statistic. In these times of anxiety, uncertainty and epidemic, when large numbers of the infected, ill and dying claim attention by virtue of magnitude, when hyperbole commands publicity, it is reassuring that hospice has never wavered from its founding principles and promise to the patient: "You matter because you are you. You matter to the last moment of your life. We will do all we can, not only to help you die peacefully, but also to help you live until you die."

This is what deserves celebration — the eloquent affirmation of hospice's commitment to being the exemplary ally of us all in the struggle to stay humane, to care about and for each other throughout our shared journey. In so doing, we may be privileged not only to facilitate the emergence of the best in human nature, but also to witness the grace of which we are capable when, as fellow travelers, we care and are cared for.

Massage Therapy

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“No other form of communication is as universally understood as touch. The compassionate touch of a hand or a reassuring hug can take away our fears, soothe our anxieties, and fill the emptiness of being lonely.”

— Randi G. Fine

Illness can peel away the layers of the individual. Those with terminal and/or chronic illness may experience not only physical and mental decline, but loss of independence and identity, as well as loss of the routine opportunities we take for granted to connect with one another — to touch and be touched. The symptoms of illness can further compound these losses as the experiences of pain, anxiety, lethargy and confusion may not only limit an individual's ability to seek and facilitate touch, but also to receive and be touched. Massage therapy offers patients intentional, purposeful and meaningful touch. It can alleviate pain and anxiety, induce relaxation, support function and enhance well-being, as well as provide the comfort of connection.

Massage therapist Joan Thompson offers a reflection of her engagement with patients in both our home and facility care environments. Joan has been with Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo's Expressive Therapies team since 2016, upon her family's return to WNY from Westchester County. Joan trained at the Center for Natural Wellness School of Massage Therapy in Albany, NY. In addition to her 15 years as a massage therapist, she has 13 years of experience working in the field of mental health.



— Abigail Unger, LCAT, MT-BC,
VP Psychosocial Services



I believe that humans are essentially social beings, and most of us crave caring, respectful touch. Touch can be healing on many levels. From a chummy pat on the back from a teammate to a mother's hug after a skinned knee, touch can communicate so many things: camaraderie, affection, love and comfort. The recent months have challenged us as touch has been discouraged for obvious reasons, but it has solidified my belief in how important it is.

As a massage therapist for Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo, I consider it a great honor to be present with my patients to provide comfort and relief through the power of touch. Often, it is not always solely the therapeutic rubbing of sore muscles — there is a connection that can be made through a gentle soothing massage that is unique. A sacred space is created when massage therapy is offered and received. Sometimes this “energy” is palpable. Patients' family members often state they feel relaxed just by the experience of watching their loved one receive a massage. In these cases, this is an added benefit to caregivers and family members who work so hard to take care of their loved ones.

As a member of the care team, our massage therapists thoroughly assess the patient's condition and symptoms to formulate a care-plan that meets their needs related to pain, anxiety, range of motion, breathing and relaxation. There are a variety of techniques utilized, including kneading, stretching, sweeping strokes, gentle strokes and holds, and acupressure points, to name just a few.

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At times, patients may benefit from a massage on their back or neck to relieve pain and tension; at other times they may benefit from a gentle hand or scalp massage and a caring presence to assist with relieving anxiety. Although massage therapy may not be for everyone, many wonder why they waited so long to finally give it a try. Some patients have described their experience as a feeling of “melting” or “floating” as they relax and their muscles “let go.”

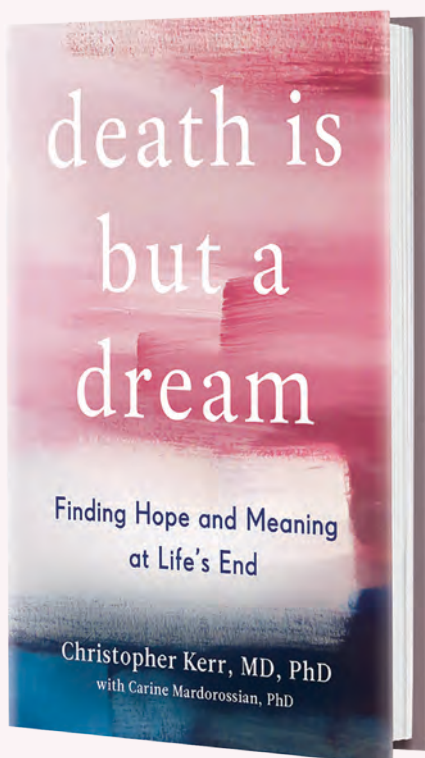
There certainly is a degree of trust that needs to exist between the massage therapist and the patient/caregivers. This trust is established through the therapist’s supportive and open communication regarding both the benefits and limitations of massage. Establishing rapport and facilitating an emotionally safe environment is essential so that the patient and their caregivers feel comfortable and are empowered to ask questions and voice concerns, as well as express needs, responses and outcomes. Sometimes, the benefits of massage extend beyond the typical hands-on technique. We often find our presence

means the lending of a supportive ear to listen or an extra smile to brighten a day. We may be witness to tears or laughter or both while providing respect and regard in our caring touch. Patients often speak about life events, family and friends and/or how their illness has affected their lives.

This work has changed me in a profoundly positive way. Although there are days that challenge me, I am continuously reminded how important it is to have appreciation and show gratitude for the loved ones in my life. I am constantly in awe of the caregivers whose first priority is the comfort and care of their loved one, and I am humbled by those I have worked with in the final days and even minutes of their lives. My experiences have given me a greater appreciation for the true connections that can exist between individuals, if only for a brief time. ■



— Joan Thompson, LMT
Massage Therapist



Death Is But a Dream

Netflix Docuseries and Public Television Documentary

We are thrilled to announce these new developments this year! Our CEO, Dr. Christopher Kerr, and his team’s research were featured in Episode 5 of the Netflix docuseries *Surviving Death*, which premiered on January 6. The program is an international hit and has been featured in the “Top 10” trending lists in the U.S. and overseas.

The *Death Is But a Dream* documentary premiered on WNET in Western New York and Southern Ontario on February 22. It will be distributed to homes nationwide in the coming weeks.

Visit drchristopherkerr.com and follow us on social media for news and updates.



Staff — Who We Are



Caitlyn Hotchkiss

CAITLYN HOTCHKISS, HOSPICE ADMISSION NURSE

People often ask, “What do you like about your job?” A common response is, “Every day is different; no two days are the same.” In my case, this is absolutely true. I wake up each day knowing that every patient and every family needs something different. The word “comfort” is described differently depending who you are talking to. Often, I am keenly aware that I must act quickly to address a patient’s

medical and emotional needs while offering reassurance and support to their loved ones. Though this role can be challenging, the personal reward is great because I know I am helping those that are seeking comfort and dignity. Just recently, I received a beautiful card from the daughter of a patient, expressing her gratitude. Another reminder of why I do what I do!

I Wish I Called *Sooner*

As a hospice admission nurse, I often have patients tell me that they think it may be too soon to be enrolled in hospice. Commonly I will hear, “I don’t think I am going to die tomorrow or in the next few days, so I don’t know why you are here now.” This was a conversation I had this past spring with a woman in her 70s, struggling with pulmonary fibrosis. She and her husband were seeking assistance, and they both expressed that home care was what they wanted.

During my visit, the patient shared her wish to avoid going to the hospital, a common sentiment, and even more so now due to the COVID-19 pandemic. She also explained she was weak, anxious, unable to sleep and struggled with shortness of breath. Once I shared information about hospice services and support in detail, they both agreed that hospice care would provide them the assistance they were seeking.

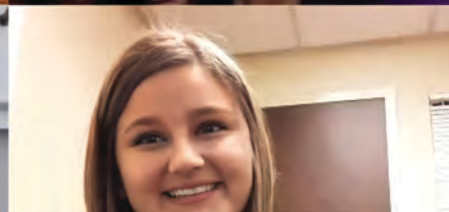
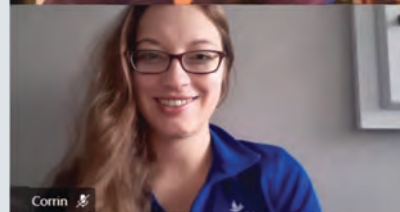
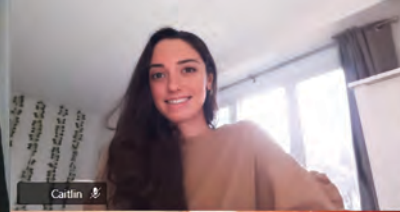
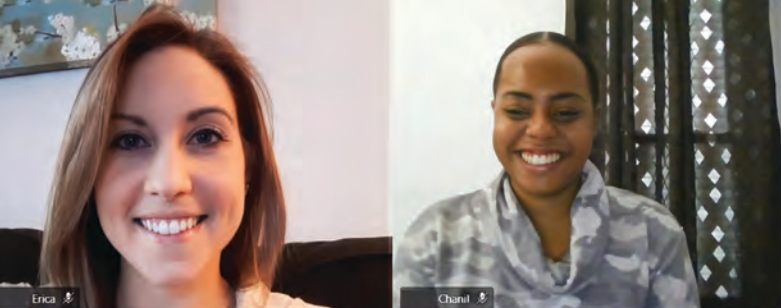
Shortly after hospice enrollment, their case nurse reported that the patient was feeling better. In fact,



the patient remarked that she felt better than she had in a long time. Her medications were adjusted, her symptoms were minimized, and she now had an adjustable hospital bed at home, allowing for greater comfort. The couple was thankful they had not waited longer to seek support. Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo provided home care resources for this couple for almost four months versus just the days or weeks they understood it to be.

Too often I hear, “I wish I would have called sooner.” I feel fortunate that I am someone who can provide reassurance that it is the right care, at the right time, just when you need it!

— Caitlyn Hotchkiss
Hospice Admission Nurse



Social Work Month is recognized and celebrated annually in March.

The theme for Social Work Month 2021 is “Social Workers Are Essential.” The profession is to be recognized for the heroic contributions it has made to help heal and support our nation during the pandemic, racial unrest, economic uncertainty and political divisiveness. Social workers are essential to the well-being of a community. The social worker’s role and function is to help people address personal and systemic barriers to healthy living. They work diligently to make a positive impact that results in positive change for individuals, families, groups and entire communities in the following areas:

- Improving well-being and enhancing the basic needs of all people — especially the vulnerable.
- Being present in time of crisis.
- Helping people overcome the impact of grief caused by death, traumatic events or natural disasters.
- Advocating for equal rights for all people, no matter their race, sexual identity, gender expression, culture or religion.
- Empowering people to live to their fullest potential
- Supporting families and schools to get through the pandemic and ensure students reach and achieve their academic potential.
- Being a crucial discipline in care that is provided in our nation’s health care system.
- Playing a key role in the nation’s response to helping individuals, families and communities cope with the pandemic.
- Acting as advocates and educators to ameliorate hunger, homelessness and poverty, and ensure safety and well-being.
- Working tirelessly on the front line to support and assist people in overcoming the negative impacts of mental health and substance abuse disorders.
- Raising awareness of issues that threaten or negatively impact people, and demanding change.
- Standing proudly together to fight for racial equity, an end to gun violence, improvements in health care and mental health care for all, and immigration reform.

- Collectively coming together to pass laws and establish policies that give people more access to community services and benefits to improve quality of life.

Social workers consistently grow in their skills to be trained as a crisis-ready workforce that helps people find resources and de-escalate community conflict. Hospice social workers have helped patients and families stay connected during the pandemic. They've helped patients that were suffering from coronavirus infections get the best possible care, stay in contact with their families and access

necessary services. And when patients die, hospice social workers are there, comforting survivors and helping them manage their grief. Hospice social workers are true heroes and a valuable part of the interdisciplinary team. ■



— **Caterina Plotnicki**
Director of Social Work

“

“There is always something we can do to bring our patients and families peace and comfort. I feel blessed to do what I do.”

— **Felicia Rebmann, LMSW, Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo Medical Social Worker**

What started as a fund to help our community with essential needs, like groceries and assistance with utility bills, has grown to support efforts beyond providing necessities. Everything we do at Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo is done to preserve quality of life or put smiles on the faces of our patients and their loved ones. We often learn about how the Angel Fund can be of assistance in our community through the eyes of our social workers, who work tirelessly day in and day out to assist HPCB families in need. Recently, we had a patient nearing end of life, and he was more stressed about his family and their well-being than his own deteriorating condition. He did not want to think or talk about dying, as he couldn't imagine not being present to love and support his family. In addition to the financial stress and struggles, he worried about his grandchildren, who were young and likely didn't understand grandpa's

illness. Felicia, an HPCB social worker, was looking for a creative way to put smiles on the faces of his grandchildren while also giving him some peace and comfort. The Angel Fund came to the rescue and provided her with a car full of goodies to share with the grandchildren, who ranged from 1 to 22 years old. Felicia also wanted to make sure the patient was able to see his grandchildren's joy one last time, so she had photos taken of them receiving the treats, smiling with excitement. The pictures were printed and taped to grandpa's bed rails so he could see them when he woke up and be at peace.

Would you like to become someone's angel by providing a gift to the Angel Fund? You can do so by contacting the Hospice Foundation at (716) 686-8090 or at HospiceBuffalo.com/Giving/Give-Hospice.



Spiritual Care Corner

Springtime Renewal

As 2020 drew to a close, many of us looked forward to putting the year behind us. As 2021 unfolds day by day, however, we find that there is still much of 2020 that has yet to fade into history. We may have ceremoniously and joyously thrown out our 2020 calendars, only to find that the constraints of the pandemic and the stresses of last year's (often tumultuous) events still linger.

The long slog of 2020 that has pushed and pulled so many of us in a myriad of unpleasant directions has left us yearning for renewal. Something renewed, something life-affirming, something that viscerally helps us to see a brighter tomorrow — something green. Indeed, we are seeking the coming of spring.

That light mist of greenly sprouting buds in trees that we see from a distance as we drive heralds the oncoming of warmer days filled with growth and activity. Our spirits and optimism build with the lengthening daylight as we anticipate flowers and walks and time well-spent on the porch.

Indeed, springtime in Western New York is nothing short of magical. There is something about it — spring's renewal — in the greater Buffalo area that really can be transformational. Many of us get the slightest taste of spring (even if we just watch its approach on our calendars), and we suddenly begin to forget winter's chill. Anticipation takes over, and it can help change the lens through which we see the world. We start to magically let go of the cold and dark, and our outlooks on life have the option to brighten a bit. The re-opening of nature can indeed help us deal with society's continued closure.

And this year, that is a sentiment that cannot be overstated. The renewal of spring and the unfolding of warmer weather and brighter days is something that will arrive. It won't be shut down, closed, or become limited — guaranteed (at least until the fall). And this year, perhaps more than any other, we need that greenly sprouting optimism.

Quite thankfully, spring is on its way to offer us exactly that. As the natural world around us begins to reawaken, there is much that we can begin to tap into — using the outer world to better our inner selves. We can look to the regeneration and optimism of spring to spark and reignite the very same within ourselves.

When we find ourselves excited at the coming warmth of sunny days, take notice of that excitement and lift it up a bit. Take a second to pause and enjoy that feeling of anticipation. Let go of whatever reality surrounds you and take a quick moment to close your eyes; think of some wonderful, spring-filled moment that uplifts your soul; and welcome a smile to your face (even if it's still behind a mask).

If it's helpful, you can use what you see each day — whether it's a spring-like weather report or budding trees and flowers striving to grow — and let it all be a reminder to you of brighter days (literally and figuratively) that are guaranteed to come. This is the work of spirituality — the process of meaning making — that has become so important to cultivate as we have all endured so very much. And thankfully, the burgeoning arrival of spring is here to help give us all a boost. As spring's renewal unfolds, may we each and all find and cultivate a measure of renewal within ourselves as well.



— Adam Scheldt
Director of Spiritual Care

Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo's *Graduate Nurse Residency Program*

Any nurse leader or human resource recruiter in the country can attest to the sleepless nights accrued over the past several years when considering the nursing shortage.

One could spend numerous hours combing through scholarly articles, citing the past, present and future analytics of the profession's entry and exit scorecard. The recurrent themes paint a bleak picture, despite an increase in nursing school enrollment. According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, there are three elements that create the perfect storm. First, the number of nurses at or near retirement is at an all-time high. The average age of a nurse today is 50. Couple that with an anticipated minimal increase in nursing school enrollment from 2019–2029, and one can determine that we will not have enough nurses to replace the mass exodus soon to be realized. The most sobering statistic, however, is that 13% of nurses change careers in the first year, and 37% say they are ready to consider a change. It is the potential 50% loss, before they even gain traction in the profession, that triggered a more strategic approach on how and who we sought to hire.

Most hospices, because of the unique and specialized provision of care rendered, require a one- to two-year level of experience in a facility-based setting, be it a hospital or nursing home. It is believed that this will assure the clinician has a foundation to build upon once they step foot in the hospice human resource department. We decided to take a different approach. Research has shown that many nurses who abandon the profession prematurely do so because they become disenchanted with the image and purpose they were drawn to when they entered nursing school. The desire to heal, make whole, comfort and support, while interfacing with like-minded practitioners, is often replaced with the burden

of short-staffing patterns that catapult novice nurses into clinical situations for which they are not prepared — not because they lack education, but because they lack the experiential notches in their clinical belt. As a result, they are unable to spend the time with patients and families they were accustomed to while in school. More importantly, they realize that the difference they were hoping to make might not happen. So, we set out to hire nurses who are fresh out of school, to give them what they need most: time to develop; time with supportive, specially trained mentors; and one-on-one time with patients and families.

The Graduate Nurse Residency Program (GNRP) promotes the continuation of excellence in end-of-life and palliative care for patients through an extended orientation and mentorship that serve to support, guide and protect the newly licensed, newly hired hospice and palliative nurse. The program's design includes both classroom and field training for six months after our agency clinical orientation is complete. The participants are not hired for a particular position. Rather, they are exposed to all areas of hospice and palliative care not only to identify where they feel most comfortable, but also to understand how each department interfaces. This awareness results in a more cohesive nursing team and, ultimately, better care. Once the program is completed, the resident is placed in an area where they feel most comfortable. If there is no position available at that time, they agree to take a position where the need is greatest.

Our first class of four graduated from the program this past December. Each was placed in the area of their choice, where they received another four weeks of location-specific orientation. The most exciting and unanticipated outcome of the program was the waiting list of new graduates that applied for the January 2021 class. The

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word of mouth from our first class highlighted the program's ability to achieve satisfaction, confidence and, most importantly, a continuation of the purpose to which they were initially drawn. As a result, we now have six residents in the January '21 class. One pioneer resident's evaluation supported our original hypothesis: "Nurses come to the profession with aspirations of healing the whole of a person when they are most vulnerable. I was given the chance to be the nurse I dreamed I could be, and I will never be able

to fully express the gratitude I feel." Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo is committed to helping new nurses reach and retain those aspirations. ■



— Kelley Clem, RN, MS
VP Clinical Education and
Patient Advocacy



Hal (on right) and his son Ryan

Hospice (*the 7-letter word I never wanted to hear*)

JOE MILLER, BROTHER AND PRIMARY CAREGIVER

Whenever I heard the word "hospice," I thought that someone was going to die within the next few hours or days. I am here to tell you that I couldn't have been more wrong!

In June of 2020, my older brother Hal received word that his cancer had spread to his liver and lungs. His physician shared that his prognosis was likely three to six months. After many meetings at Roswell, my brother made the decision that he didn't want to go through chemotherapy or radiation for the second time.

After much discussion, I contacted Hospice Palliative Care Buffalo (HPCB) to ask for help. Lynn, an outreach representative, came to my house to meet with me, my brother and my wife and to answer questions about hospice care and services. With utmost respect, compassion and kindness, our questions and concerns were addressed. We now understood the care that HPCB would offer my brother and our family, and thankfully, my brother's insurance would cover all costs associated with hospice, which I now understand is most often the case.

Upon our request, a nurse and social worker came to my brother's apartment to make sure his living conditions were suitable for his upcoming journey and to admit him into HPCB's care. I was present at this visit, and once again, the hospice representatives spent a lot of time getting to know my brother. Hal explained that he wanted to stay in his apartment, especially given the current visitation restrictions in facilities due to COVID-19.

Currently, a nurse, social worker, chaplain and doctor are handling my brother's care, and they will be with him throughout his journey. HPCB also provided suggestions about other things to consider, such as pre-planning my brother's funeral mass, taking care of his burial needs, legal planning, life insurance review and countless other details that we, as a family, may have delayed.

Hospice is a gift. I have peace of mind knowing that my brother will live his life with dignity and comfort surrounded by his family and friends.

Helping Hospice Connect to Our Community



As we reflect on this past year, it was anything but ordinary.

We had to rethink and reimagine much of what we do. We are grateful to have a robust volunteer team, often exceeding 900 active volunteers in normal times. Our response to COVID-19 impacted our volunteers, pausing our volunteer services and activities.

Volunteers are the backbone of our organization. When people think of volunteer work at Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo, they may often think that volunteers only work directly with patients or families. While we do have volunteers that work directly with patients, we also have volunteers who help with so much more, such as supporting our various departments on campus with administrative tasks and supporting our organization overall by giving their time at our events. Volunteers help us to achieve so much.

Volunteer services were paused last year. We welcomed a small group of volunteers back to our campus over the summer and fall months to help with campus gardens, as they were able to work safely outdoors. As the weather turned

colder and the days grew shorter, we started to look at new opportunities for volunteers. Working with our clinical staff, we identified areas of need. In response, Patient Support Volunteers have assisted with contactless activities to help support our clinical staff. Additionally, they started making friendly phone calls or writing cards and notes to patients or their caregivers. Phone calls turned into weekly chats and check-ins, and letters turned into pen pals. Individuals who had been socially isolated because of the pandemic now had the opportunity to connect with someone from their community: a volunteer.

Normally, it's not uncommon for us to have hundreds of volunteers helping over the holiday months. They decorate the campus, sell buffalos and angel ornaments, deliver meals and gifts, and much more. In working with our volunteers, the magic of the season is brought to life. The holidays looked very different this past year than previous years, but we were committed to remaining true to our mission. We were able to bring some joy during the season to our patients and families in our hospice and Essential Care programs. We had about 20 Patient Support Volunteers assist with delivering meals to patient families at Thanksgiving, as well as meal and gift deliveries at Christmas. Our patients and families were the priority, and volunteers were there to help.

Regardless of their role, volunteers are a special group of individuals who help connect our community. While volunteer services have been limited over this past year, and the work of a volunteer has changed, our volunteers remain committed and are always ready to lend a helping hand when needed. We look forward to days ahead when volunteers fully resume their work, doing what they do best.



— Lynsey Danat
Volunteer Services Manager

Volunteer Spotlight

Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo is fortunate to have hundreds of volunteers who give of their time and talents in so many different ways. Whether it's **providing leadership as a board member**, assisting in the inpatient unit, providing companionship to patients at home or working one of the many annual signature events, our organization could never accomplish all we do without the hard work and commitment of our volunteers. With this issue of Journeys, we are launching our Volunteer Spotlight and asked one of our leadership volunteers — our treasured board member — to share what drives him to give of himself.

Our patients, their loved ones and our staff thank you for the impact you make on the Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo community every day.

Forever Grateful & Giving Back

Volunteers come to Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo for various reasons. Some are passionate about the cause, and some are looking to spend free time in meaningful ways. For Robert (Bob) Schreck, an attorney at the Barnes Firm and Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo board member, his volunteerism truly comes from the heart as a way to give back for the utmost care he and his family feel was generously extended to them. Bob became a board member because he wanted to “do more than just being a donor,” as Bob puts it.

Bob's story started 10 years ago when his dad had surgery and unexpectedly did not regain consciousness. His family decided to place him in hospice care during these last few days of Dad's life, as that was one of the care options the hospital was offering. Bob and his family were devastated by the news that their father would not recover, and the end of life was near.

Thinking back to those last three days of his dad's life, Bob recalled, “It was amazing to witness so many wonderful people who were providing care and comfort to an unconscious man, but they were acting like he was conscious.” Bob said this was an incredible comfort to him and his family.

Shortly after this, the Schreck family went through more heartache when Bob's 88-year-old mother fell and broke her hip, causing much pain and further deterioration of health. The family, once again, had to decide on a care plan at this difficult time. They chose hospice care, since they were already familiar with it and had had such a great experience.

Bob and his family were in awe again as they witnessed the hospice team of nurses, aides, expressive

therapists, spiritual care counselors and bereavement

professionals working their magic to care for not only their mom/grandmother, but to help each of them to feel comfort as well.

The Schreck family was at ease knowing that mom/grandma had no pain or discomfort. Bob described his mom, who was very beautiful and tall and prided herself on being well-manicured, well-dressed and always wearing a fresh coat of lipstick. “She never left the house without her lipstick,” Bob commented fondly. As his mom grew thinner and weaker over the next week, Bob told his boys that grandma would be very upset if she went to heaven with no lipstick. “Suddenly, a nurse came back into her room and applied lipstick on mom,” recalled Bob with a smile and a tear. “Mom died an hour later on Christmas Eve. That was such a kind, thoughtful, generous and amazing thing to do for mom! Getting the lipstick was probably just a part of a normal day for that nurse because it's just what they do. My only regret is that I don't know who the nurse was to thank her today.”



Robert J. Schreck, Esq.



Presented by **KeyBank** 

This year's Hospice Spring Bouquet sale will extend over two weeks from Monday, March 1 – Saturday, March 13, in order to serve our Western New York community in a safe manner.

Our public site sale will look a little different this year, as we acknowledge that most businesses are limiting the number of people in their buildings. Instead of selling indoors, we will be parked outside our public sites in a flower truck to ensure that nobody needs to enter a building to get their flowers.

The flower trucks will be traveling to the locations listed here. Via our website and social media platforms, we will keep the community updated on where the flower trucks are, so be sure to follow along. For more information and the schedule, please visit HospiceSpringBouquetSale.com.

Check our website for specific dates and times for each location.

FLOWER TRUCK PUBLIC SITES:

Larkin at Exchange Building

Larkin Center of Commerce

Oishei Children's Hospital

Buffalo General Hospital

Dent Neurologic Institute

AppleTree Business Park

Buffalo Medical Group

Cancer Care of WNY

Excelsior Orthopaedics

SUNY Buffalo

Windsong Radiology

Premier Wine & Spirits

Additional sites are listed online.



Save the Dates!
Saturday, May 15, and
Sunday, May 16

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, we will continue to adapt. Check out our walk website at HospiceMemorialWalk.com for any updates.



Everyone knows DiSaronno. She loves enjoying the ride from her little basket.

HOSPICE HELPER SPOTLIGHT

Ironhorse Motorcycle Ride for Hospice

What do you get when you combine a reverend, bikers, a Chihuahua named after a top-shelf liqueur, and mounds of ice cream?

The Ironhorse Motorcycle Ride for Hospice! Event founders Brian Kloiber, Sammi (Sandra) Sperduti and Reverend Carl Yount sat down with us, virtually of course, to tell us why this annual fundraiser holds such a special place in their hearts. The venture started 11 years ago to get riders together for a scenic ride while collecting donations to support Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo. As the years went on, the crowds grew bigger. The founders started to notice returning riders, increasing attendance and the overall appreciation of HPCB as an extremely worthwhile cause. In efforts to raise more funds and include those who

don't ride motorcycles, a basket raffle and 50/50 raffle were added to the event.

Even the year that turned everything upside-down was not enough to stop this determined group. In August 2020, the event rallied up about 50 motorcyclists and proved to be a safe activity as everyone was able to ride far enough apart. Restaurants and shops were notified ahead of time, and masks were worn while not riding. Since 2013, this event has raised \$20,750!

What makes this Hospice Helper fundraiser so unique is the nature of the ride as well as the

commitment to the mission of HPCB. The six-hour ride kicks off with Reverend Carl providing a blessing to keep everyone safe during their travels, and then they're off! The route is changed every year, offering riders several breaks — one of which always includes an ice cream stop. It's not every day you see a reverend on a motorcycle stopping for some ice cream!

Like many of our readers, each of the three event founders, Brian, Sammi and Rev. Carl, have been touched by Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo in some way. HPCB was able to help Brian's dear friend spend time with his family and friends before cancer took his life at a young age. Brian stated, "I will never forget how hospice made the last moments of his life the best possible moments." Sammi reflected on the time HPCB cared for her close friend, Judy DiPietro Brown. They were able to share stories and memories all from the comfort of Judy's living room. Reverend Carl has seen HPCB in action as well as through his work at his ministry.

When asking this passionate group of three, "Why hospice?" the answer was unanimous. The work HPCB does for individuals nearing the end is remarkable. While we at HPCB will thankfully accept their praise, it should be known how much of a difference individuals such as Brian, Sammi and Rev. Carl can make. It is thanks to Hospice Helpers such as the Ironhorse Motorcycle Riders that we are able to continue providing unparalleled care in the darkest of times.

The Hospice Helpers program allows individuals or organizations to hold fundraising events benefiting Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo. Hospice Helpers contribute greatly to our overall fundraising efforts. Despite the challenges that last year presented us with, our Hospice Helpers persevered and continued to fundraise for HPCB. Our gratitude runs deep as we know how difficult last year was for so many.

If you would like to become a Hospice Helper or find out more about the program, please contact the special events department at **(716) 989-2010** or events@palliativecare.org. ■



HOSPICE
Helpers

COMMUNITY EVENTS UPDATE

We are so grateful for our Hospice Helpers, who continue to help us with our fundraising efforts.

Event Name	In Memory Of	Total Raised	Organizers
Ironhorse Motorcycle Ride	Judy DiPietro Brown	\$1,305	Brian Kloiber, Sammi (Sandra) Sperduti, Reverend Carl Yount
Don & Nancy Diem Memorial Baseball Pool	Don and Nancy Diem	\$800	Tom Diem
Share the Comfort Pillow Sale	Douglas H. Naylon & Maureen R. L. Mussenden	20 pillows	Nancy Naylon Murphy
Charity Tournament	Loved Ones	\$1,126.60	Great Lakes Gators Travel Baseball Team



2020 FACEBOOK FUNDRAISERS

We would like to give a special thank you to everyone who hosted a Facebook fundraiser in 2020 in support of Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo! If you are looking to start a Facebook

fundraiser in support of HPCB and need some guidance, please reach out to our Special Events Team at events@palliativecare.org or **(716) 989-2010**.

Blessing in Hospice Inpatient Unit



Frances was known to all as a strong and loving mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. First and foremost, she loved her family, and she fought every day to spend more time with her loved ones.

After receiving her cancer diagnosis, Frances endured immunotherapy and radiation. Over time, pain and other challenging symptoms became a burden, and the oncologist shared that the treatments were not slowing the progression of her disease. Hospice care was recommended, and our family acknowledged that help and expertise were needed to keep Frances at home, where she wanted to be. Knowing that Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo had provided wonderful care for other loved ones in the past, we knew it was time to call.

Frances had a goal — she was looking forward to attending her granddaughter's wedding in 2021. Every day she would say, "I will be here for

my little Desi's wedding." Seeing Frances's rapid decline, Jeffrey, a hospice chaplain, recommended planning a blessing so that Frances could celebrate the impending wedding with all of us. Mindful of COVID-19 restrictions, our immediate family and the hospice team arranged for a beautiful, intimate celebration: a blessing, a new dress for Frances, flowers, a photographer and cupcakes for all. The photos provide a glimpse of the moments we will treasure forever. A few days after this special occasion, Frances was at peace and passed away comfortably.

Our family is grateful for the care, compassion and comfort provided by Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo.

Frances would always sign her notes and cards, "With all my love," and now, our family says, "Right back at you!"

— The Family of Frances Heers

Spring Appeal — *Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo*



This season we will be bringing you our spring appeal. Donations raised will support our Essential Care for Children program. Essential

Care for Children is our home-based palliative (symptom control) care program that provides coordination of medical services, as well as psychosocial, emotional and spiritual support to seriously ill children and their families.

Our appeal will share the journey of one of our pediatric patients and their family. Their story will highlight the holistic, unifying approach and philosophy of Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo. When you receive our appeal in the mail, we hope you find its message inspiring and that you learn something new about our efforts. And we certainly hope you consider giving. To make a gift in support of our Essential Care for Children program today, please visit HospiceBuffalo.com/Giving.

THANK YOU!

You Were There For Us *Once Again!*

2020. A year when we as a human race were pushed to limits beyond any of our experiences, and yet you still took the time to support Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo. We are forever grateful. Our doors never closed. We never paused. We remained committed to being there for our patients and families throughout one of the

most difficult times we have ever known. It is because of your support that this has been possible!

When our fall appeal and end-of-year requests brought you the love story of Mike and Jacqueline, your hearts were touched, and you thought of Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo. With nearly \$420,000 raised through our annual request and more than 2,800 donors showing their fondness for HPCB, we are humbled by your generosity!

For all the treasures you share with us, we thank you.

Consider Hospice for Your Planned Giving

Everyone has the ability to make a planned gift. Planned gifts of any size support our mission, providing us with the confidence that our financial needs will be met well into our future. Remembering Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo with a bequest in your will, or as a beneficiary of your life insurance

or retirement plan assets, will make a lasting impact on our community.

For further information, or if you have already decided to include Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo in your legacy plans, please notify the Hospice Foundation at (716) 686-8090.

NHPCO *Council Appointments*

Our organization has historically played a large role within the national hospice movement — former CEO Don Schumacher led the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO) for many years.

Given the ever-changing world of healthcare, we are proud to be at the forefront of the national effort to preserve and advance the cause of hospice.

We are pleased to announce our staff's NHPCO appointments:



Adam Scheldt, Diversity Advisory
Term began Jan 01, 2021



Roseann McAnulty, Palliative Care
Term began Jan 01, 2021



Lynsey Danat, Next Generation Leadership
Term began Jan 01, 2021

The Rudin Family *Giggle Fund*

It has often been said that laughter is the best medicine.



Neil Rudin firmly believed in this philosophy — so much so that he decided laughter would be his legacy. A husband, father and college professor, Neil was creative, charitable and a lover of life. When he and his wife, Cheryl, learned of his ALS diagnosis in 2010, Neil refused to lead with anything other than a positive attitude, teaching his family and friends the true meaning of courage, grace and dignity.

As Neil's illness progressed, his thoughts did not turn inward. Neil began to reflect upon children with terminal illnesses and decided then to create The Rudin Family Giggle Fund. The sole purpose of this fund was to bring joy and laughter into the lives of sick children.

As 50-year natives of Buffalo, acknowledging the great work of Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo, Cheryl and Neil Rudin chose this newly created fund

to support the Essential Care for Children program under HPCB. Since its inception in 2011, The Rudin Family Giggle Fund has brought thousands of smiles and giggles to the youngest of our patients. Birthdays and milestones have been celebratory events. Ice cream socials and Halloween parties are now traditions within Essential Care for Children. All of this is due to one man's commitment to leaving a footprint of kindness on this world.

Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo is so grateful to Neil, Cheryl and the Rudin children and grandchildren for remaining passionate about the fund they have created. Joy has been spread, love has been shared, and Neil and his legacy of laughter will certainly live on.

If you would like to make a donation to The Rudin Family Giggle Fund, please visit HospiceBuffalo.com/Giving.

CORPORATE SPOTLIGHT

Thank You, CTG



The Hospice Foundation would like to extend a special thank you to our friends at CTG (Computer Task Group), our presenting sponsor and host of the Light-A-Life Memorial Tree Lighting Ceremony. For over 30 years, CTG has played a vital role in this annual event, providing the Christmas trees, lights and decorations that make this ceremony so special. It is because of their support and generosity that we can gather our Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo community each year to celebrate and remember our loved ones.

Thank you, CTG, for all you have done for us over the years. You are a pillar of our tree-lighting ceremony, and we are so grateful to have a partner like you in the Western New York community.

Serving Our *Community*



In replacement of our annual Halloween Party, roughly 100 goodie bags were assembled and delivered to Essential Care families.



For Thanksgiving, about 230 patients and family members enjoyed delicious meals that were prepared and sent out. Bags were overflowing with stuffing, cranberry sauce, gravy, mashed potatoes and more. Volunteers were able to help by delivering the meals to patients and families.



Christmas was no exception to the holiday fun. Volunteers were able to touch the lives of over 450 patients and families by delivering festive gifts.



Over 1,300 Light-A-Life bells were sold to our Hospice & Palliative Care community. The Light-A-Life Memorial Tree Lighting Ceremony was televised for the first time ever, reaching viewers safely at home. Six trees stood lit and decorated with almost 1,400 memorial name tags. In addition, the Evergreen Society raised \$14,750!



Although we could not set up shop around the community, the annual buffalo and angel sale still took place on campus. All of the 2020 angel ornaments were sold out, and nearly 160 buffalos were sold!



together in *dignity.*

Thank you to those who have chosen to support Hospice & Palliative Care Buffalo patient care through memorial and tribute gifts. This is such a meaningful way to sustain our mission while offering an expression of one's sympathy and respect to family members and friends. To the loved ones of those remembered, we extend our sincerest condolences.

Listed below are one-time gifts of \$100 or more received from July 1 – December 31, 2020 that were made in memory of a single tribute. Please know that with proper information provided at the time of your donation, notification of all gifts, regardless of amount, is sent to the family of those being remembered.

If there is an error or omission, we are sincerely sorry. Please contact the Hospice Foundation at (716) 686-8090 so we may address this.

in memory of...

Migdalía Maria Abato

Mr. & Mrs. Michael D. Jozwiak & Family
Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Sigismondi, Mr. & Mrs. Nicholas Sigismondi, Kelly Forrest, Mr. & Mrs. Ray Dashineau, Rose Meranto, Mr. & Mrs. Jim Worthington and Mr. & Mrs. Vincent Chiarenza
Mr. & Mrs. Frank Sygnatur

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Muriel Adams

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Campanella, Marge,
Michelle, Margaret Bernecki,
Tammy MacCleod, Ronda
Padovani, Maureen
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Ms. Lisa Brucato

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- Summer Affair Thursday, July 22
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- Light-A-Life Memorial Tree Lighting Saturday, December 4

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- To receive Journeys newsletter electronically, email info@palliativecare.org
- To receive community and event updates, email info@palliativecare.org
- For volunteer opportunities, email volunteer@palliativecare.org or call (716) 989-2014
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